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Young Loyalties: Loyalty Conceptions and Loyalty Conflicts of Young Dutch and English Public Administrators

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Abstract: Public administrators nowadays find themselves in a differentiated polity, which affects them in many ways. Images of the new public administrator clash with the classic images of the 'old' one: the public administrator who neutrally and obediently carries out orders of elected politicians. Since Weber, many interesting studies have been done on the separation between administration and politics. In this literature it becomes clear that public administrators today serve many masters, not just politicians. Do any of the interests of their masters contradict each other? Among the various objects of loyalty—colleagues, the public good, administrators' consciences, administrators' organizations, the law, the organizations' clients, and elected officials—where do the loyalties of young public administrators lie? In this study we focus on the loyalties young public administrators, that is, on the future of governance. Generational differences could have implications for, for example, recruitment, training and development, rewards and working arrangements, and management styles. To answer the research questions, we conducted an international comparative study. Twenty young English administrators and 20 young Dutch administrators Q sorted statements on their loyalties. The answer to our main research question turns out to be a mix of all possible loyalties. Our results describe five conceptions of loyalty. These results are compared to previous Q studies on the loyalties of older Dutch administrators and to a recent comparative Q study on English and Dutch administrators' democratic subjectivities. We found two typical Dutch loyalty conceptions and two typical English loyalty conceptions. Finally, we found that different loyalty conceptions mean different loyalty conflicts.

Introduction

Today's public administrators find themselves in an ever more differentiated polity (Bevir, 2010) with rapid societal changes that variously affect them and their loyalties. Much has been written on the modern, professional public administrator who enjoys considerable discretionary freedom (Meier, 1993). Partly influenced by the literature on new public management (for instance, Maesschalck, 2004) or new public service (for instance, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Perry & Wise, 1990), public administrators are expected to provide value for money, quality, responsiveness, strategic operation, an untainted organizational reputation, and more (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000).

The images of the new public administrator clash with the classic public servant (Weber, 1946) who neutrally and obediently carried out elected politicians' orders. Among the many reports on the separation between administration and politics since Weber, Svava (1998, p. 51) has claimed that 'One of the most important and enduring theoretical constructs in public administration is the politics-administration dichotomy model'. In this literature it becomes clear that public administrators today serve many masters, not just politicians. Considering top administrators in the Netherlands, De Graaf (2011) found that although all administrators see their elected ministers as important objects of loyalty, no type adheres to Weber's ideal of unquestioned obedience and loyalty. De Graaf found differences in how modern top public administrators weigh their loyalties to the minister vis-à-vis other loyalty objects and identified four particular loyalty conceptions. In a comparison of Dutch and English administrators, Jeffares and Skelcher (2011) identified five democratic subjectivities.

In this study we focus on the loyalties of young public administrators—the future of governance. Do their loyalties differ from older administrators? Are their loyalties affected by the constant downsizing of which they are usually victim? Generational differences could have implications for recruitment, training and development, rewards, working arrangements and management styles, among other things (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Among the various objects of loyalty—colleagues, the public good, administrators' consciences, administrators' organizations, the law, the organizations' clients, and elected officials—where do the loyalties of young public administrators lie?

Following Jeffares and Skelcher (2011), we conducted an international comparative study on the loyalties of 20 English and 20 Dutch young administrators. We find that the answer to our main research question turns out to be a mix of all possible loyalties. Our results describe five conceptions of loyalty.

Background

Young Administrators

Young public administrators come in all shapes and sizes. They work in areas ranging from national to local governments, policy making to implementation, urban planning to social security. Mir, Mir and Mosca (2002 p. 193) claim that waves of organizational downsizing have weakened young employees' commitment to their organization vis-à-vis their older counterparts. Why be loyal to an organization that has become less loyal to them? But if young employees are less loyal to their organizations, then to what or whom are they loyal?

De Graaf (2011, p. 300) points out that loyalty conceptions vary with public administrator groups: 'client loyalty seems to play a large role in the loyalty conceptions of street-level administrators, whereas loyalty to stakeholders in the policy field plays a small role in the loyalty conceptions of top administrators'. There is reason to believe, therefore, that young public administrators—as a group—have their own set of loyalties as well:

They don't live for work, they work to live. Teenagers and young adults—the so-called Generation Y—have watched with horror as their parents worked punishing hours in their scramble for money and status. Now, as this group go in search of jobs, they have different priorities. They care less about salaries, and more about flexible working, time to travel and a better work-life balance. And employers are having to meet their demands. (Asthana, 2008)

There is much discussion about whether generations vary substantially in terms of work values and beliefs. Some researchers state that generational differences do exist and, therefore, generations should be treated differently. When employers fail to address the differences, possible consequences are misunderstanding and miscommunication, lower productivity, and poor wellbeing of employees (Smola & Sutton, 2002, p. 380; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008, pp. 878–879). Those differences could also have implications for recruitment, training and development, rewards and working arrangements, and management styles (Parry & Urwin, 2011, p. 80). Other researchers, however, argue that generational differences should not be over-generalized (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008, p. 891), that generations are more alike than different (Jurkiewicz, 2000, p. 63) and that generational differences do not fully explain all work preferences of employees (Bright, 2010, p. 11). Other factors like aging (that is, stage in life-cycle), also play an important role (Markides, 1978, p. 392; Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008, p. 857).

To young public administrators the content of work is the most important motive for working in the public sector. What they can learn from their jobs is also important to them (Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2010, pp. 66, 102). Young public administrators see themselves as more flexible, result-driven, creative, and communicative than older public administrators (Ruig, Kemper, & Engelen, 2008, p. 17). They are more flexible because they shift more rapidly between policy fields and governments, are more generalist than specialist, are more adaptable to new situations, and like to work in a project-based way. They are more result-driven because they consider that results are more important than rules and procedures, they dislike slow procedures, they want to be held more accountable for their work, and they value their employers' interests. They are more creative because they bring new ideas to the organization and try to find better ways of working, even if they may be disappointed by the non-receptiveness of others to their new ideas. They are more communicative because they are more direct with colleagues, managers, and citizens (Ruig et al., 2008, pp. 17–19).

Such characteristics point to young public administrators' professional method of working. Older public administrators mainly stay with one successful method of working; young public administrators continue to try to find the best solution (Korsten, 2011, p. 4). Mir et al. (2002, p. 196) have claimed that younger employees demonstrate a higher commitment to their work, but a lower commitment to their organization. One reason is the lower level of commitment of organizations to their employees. Many organizations treat employees as a means to an end, despite talk of 'the company family' and 'loyalty to employees' (Smola & Sutton, 2002, p. 379). Similarly, Mir et al. note (2002, p. 188): 'In the wake of waves of corporate downsizing, which are on the rise throughout the public sector as well and are triggered not by falling productivity but more by the exigencies of the stock market, workers are justifiably wary of their expectations from their employers'. Employees have become disposable (Smola & Sutton, 2002, p. 379).

Young employees—especially the more highly educated—are attracted by varied work, a good work-life balance, good career development opportunities, an appealing corporate culture, and good pay (Synovate, 2010, p. 6). They are, compared to older employees, less likely to feel that work should play an important role in life (Smola & Sutton, 2002, p. 378), desiring a good work-life balance and placing a higher value on leisure. This is in part due to increased work hours and decreased vacation time (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010, p. 1133).

Young employees are also eager to be promoted (Smola & Sutton, 2002, p. 378). They want more freedom and authority, and are more

prepared to leave when their needs are not met (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008, p. 903; Steijn, 2008, p. 24) or upon winning the lottery (Smola & Sutton, 2002, p. 378). Young public administrators stand at the threshold of their careers. Aiming for a good working life might mean loyalty to one's own ambitions and values, perhaps even leaving the organization for a different one.

As mentioned previously, results are more important than rules for young public administrators, although this does not imply that they do not take rules seriously. Being relatively new in the organization, young public administrators may not initially flout the rules. And, to earn their spurs, they might adopt a reserved attitude and respect formal positions, especially those toward the top of the hierarchy. It could be that young public administrators do not dare to, or find it difficult to, impose their will on others and therefore accept things—even when that will is well-substantiated by, for example, professional guidelines. Or perhaps they just accept their roles as public administrators and reconcile themselves to the decisions of the politicians.

Whether young public administrators vary in their loyalty conceptions remains a question. We used Q methodology to find out.

International Comparison: England and the Netherlands

Little international comparative research has been done on administrative loyalties. In a literature review, Parry and Urwin (2011, p. 90) claim that as a result of the number of studies conducted in western countries, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, there is a tendency to consider the conclusions obtained about generations as global truths. Egri and Ralston (2004, p. 217), however, claim that generalizing such western observations has no basis. Nor was support found for the claim that the most recent generations in China and the United States are more similar in their value orientations than their predecessors. Parry and Urwin argue that even results from one western country cannot be generalized to another: 'on the surface, as these countries are culturally similar, this may seem valid, but if we consider historical, political, cultural and technological events in these countries, this may give us more cause for concern' (Parry & Urwin, 2011, p. 90). Further research on differences between western countries is thus warranted.

Here we compare the youngest working generation of England with its Dutch counterpart. More specifically, the comparison is between young English and Dutch public administrators working for local governments.

Design: Q Study on Loyalties

Following De Graaf (2011), we define loyalty as the willing and practical

dedication of a person to an object (based on Stoker, 2005, p. 273). Amidst all the concept's ambiguities, we agree with most organizational scholars that the subject both identifies with the object of loyalty (the cause) and promotes its interests (Fletcher, 1993).

The first consideration in selecting 20 English and 20 Dutch young public administrators was age (20 to 35). Although 'young' varies from study to study, our range is most common. Second, the respondents had to have at least 12 months work experience, so they would have an understanding of their work environments and their loyalties. Third, the respondents had to be working in management, policy development, or administration rather than in front-line service provision. The Dutch sample comprised men and women equally, whereas the English sample had 12 females. The average age of the English respondents was 27.8 years; the Dutch average was 28.9 years. Of the English respondents, 15 had a Bachelor's degree and three a Master's degree. Of the Dutch respondents, six had a Bachelor's degree and 14 a Master's degree. Finally, work experience of the English was on average 4.8 years, compared 2.6 years for the Dutch.

To facilitate comparison, we used De Graaf's (2011) 42-statement Q set (see Appendix). The set had been developed from an original list of more than 600 statements of administrators' loyalties according to a sampling scheme based on Petter's (2005) responsibilities of administrators' loyalties and Bovens' objects (1998), which partly overlap Petter's distinctions. In the sampling scheme, for each of seven loyalty categories (hierarchical, personal, social, professional, societal, legal, and customer), both "thick" and "thin" concepts were sampled.

We conducted Q-sort interviews in England between November 2010 and January 2011, and in the Netherlands between April and June 2011. The sorts were scaled from "most disagree" to "most agree" and took 20 to 30 minutes on average to complete. Semi-structured interviews of 30 to 40 minutes followed the sorting.

The individual Q sorts were factor-analysed using PQMethod 2.11 (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2002), with centroid extraction and varimax rotation. We chose a solution with five factors (loyalty conceptions) (see Appendix). A possible sixth factor contained only one defining sort and did not make sense in our analysis.

Descriptions of the Loyalty Conceptions

Each factor is given a name that lends an overall impression of the loyalty conception. For example, respondents belonging to Factor A are called legal moralists. Thereafter, statements representing the loyalty conceptions will be used to describe the loyalty conception in more detail. The corresponding numbers of the Q-set statements are in parentheses. Finally, a summary of the loyalty conception is given.

Quotations, shown in italics, are drawn from respondent interviews to illustrate the points. The section ends with some descriptions of the young administrators.

A: Legal Moralists

Serving society is not a basis for legal moralists' work (7): *I want to have a job that means something and is important, but at the same time, I'm going to work to make money for my family and support my family; that comes first.*

Legal moralists obey the law. When elected officials ask something of them that is against the law, and elected officials do not heed their protests, legal moralists will not concede (2): *It's a matter of law. I'm not going to break the law no matter what anybody asks of me, no matter who asks me either.* Legal moralists feel responsible for their actions and are the only group distinguished here to agree with statement 17, "Public administrators should be accountable to criminal law for their public actions, even when doing exactly what their political superiors expect or want them to do".

Nor will legal moralists act against their own moral principles. They have opinions on the morality of their actions at work and cannot leave that up to their political superiors (15). *Because if it is against your own conscience then . . . personal principles do have to be in there. You can't sell your soul down the river.*

Legal moralists are not public administrators 24 hours a day (24). *It doesn't define me as a person. I don't think about it all the time. I have a social life, I have a family. Work is part of you, but it's not about who I am.* Nor do legal moralists, as young public administrators, feel strongly connected to other young public administrators (38): *There is no connection with other young public administrators, there isn't any.* Good personal relations with their superiors, however, will make them more committed to their work (42): *The better you can get on with your managers, the more you like to do, the happier you feel about work, and the better you do work. You feel demotivated when you can't get on with your manager.*

To summarize, legal moralists do not work for the government because they want to serve society. They work for a living; a meaningful job is a bonus. They are law-abiding and will not act against their own moral principles.

B: Obedient Freethinkers

Obedient freethinkers disagree with statement 21, "I know what is legal, not what is right. I stick to what is legal": *I believe that you have to do your job in such a way that you think is right, then you know yourself what is right or wrong.* They like to have room to express their creativity:

You can come up with initiatives yourself and decide that is what we should do. I like that we can have some spontaneity, that we can choose what to do, rather than do the same thing over and over again or have your work directed all the time. Creativity is also reflected in their ideas on professionalism. Obedient freethinkers do not believe that professionalism and loyalty to professional rules are leading values in their work (32): *I think that you can be unique in these things. It is about what the organization needs, not what a profession says about it.* Results are more important than rules: *People focus too much on output instead of results and societal effects.*

Of all the loyalty conceptions, obedient freethinkers disagree most with the statement that public administrators should be accountable to criminal law for their public actions, even when doing what their political superiors expect or want them to do (17): *As a public administrator you sometimes write advice according to the will of the council. If that turns out to be a complete fiasco . . . imagine if they shift the blame for that fiasco onto you, then you are penalized for something you, as a public administrator, aren't responsible for.*

Like the legal moralists, obedient freethinkers will not act against their own consciences. Obedient freethinkers very much agree with statement 25, "I should be able to live with myself, which is why being loyal to my own conscience is the most important thing for me". When they find an assignment irresponsible, loyalty to their own consciences and identities is the deciding factor (34): *I have to live with myself. I don't want to do things that don't feel right. If I think an assignment irresponsible, then loyalty to my own conscience and identity is decisive.*

Obedient freethinkers feel like the same person whether at work or not. *I think the person you are outside of work is the person you are at work as well.* That is why obedient freethinkers agree very much with statement 14, "How I look at things in my work is partly determined by the people who surround me in private life; a discussion with friends can influence my judgment": *How you look at things is influenced by your whole environment, not only by your working environment where you spend eight hours a day.* But obedient freethinkers do not feel like public administrators outside of work. *I really do love my job, but when I go home, when I leave work, I'm certainly not a public administrator anymore. Then I'm just [name] who is doing her own things.*

To summarize, obedient freethinkers want to be free in their work; they do not like to be bound by rules and regulations. Rules and regulations are fine as long as they do not get in the way of results. In addition, obedient freethinkers decide for themselves what is right and wrong. They accept their role as executors, however, and will thus comply with councillors' or elected officials' decisions except when they

are against their consciences.

C: Democratic Servants

Compared to the other loyalty factors, democratic servants disagree less with statement 35, "I feel a stronger connection to government than to my own organization": *You commit yourself to the public sector, not to a particular organization or council. In essence, you have chosen for the public sector, not for a council.* Democratic servants want to serve society (7): *That is the essence of the whole thing. That's why you're going to work for the government and not for the private sector, because you want to serve society.* Consequently, democratic servants believe that, in their work, public values come before their own political values (13): *I have my own opinions. But I'm a public administrator, not a politician or a councillor, so I believe you can't take that position. I should look at things objectively.* Moreover, democratic servants believe that public administrators should not base their decisions on personal values because in such a case citizens can no longer trust that policies and rules are followed uniformly (41). As such, and unlike other loyalty types, democratic servants disagree with statement 15, "I have my own opinions on the morality of my actions when at work—I cannot leave that up to my political superiors": *You can't put the emphasis on your personal values; they can't be leading.*

Although democratic servants work for the government because they want to serve society, loyalty to their councillors can be more important than serving the public interest (26): *If a resident calls who disagrees with a certain choice . . . if I put myself in his shoes, then I can imagine how he disagrees. However, you've got an organization, one that made that decision. It's difficult to handle such a situation.* Such loyalties towards both society and council cause conflict.

In line with the foregoing, when democratic servants disagree with a policy, they do not tell the concerned parties of their organization (31): *Politicians are elected democratically, they make decisions . . . I'm the face of the organization. If I abandoned the policies . . . that's a matter of integrity.* Consequently, democratic servants strongly disagree with statement 5: "In any mature democracy, young public administrators should be allowed to say what they want to in public. That's simply freedom of speech": *Sometimes freedom of speech goes very far. . . . As a representative of a public institution, you have to adopt an independent position. It's simply not possible to say anything you want in public.*

To summarize, democratic servants work for the government because they want to serve society, and do so in a democratic way. They will not go against the will of the councillors or elected officials, and they minimize their own personal and political values at work.

D: Strict Supporters

Strict supporters find it important to know all the rules and regulations and to stick to them (11): *In local government that is probably the most important thing. All these rules are put in place for a reason. And: That's just part of your working life really, to know what the rules are and to stick to them.* Consequently, strict supporters believe that professionalism and loyalty to professional rules are the leading values in their work (32): *I believe when you work for a local government, you need to be professional at all times and loyal to your organization. Do the best you can, applying professional values to your job.*

Strict supporters are more internally, rather than externally, oriented. They definitely feel a stronger connection to their own organization than the government in general (35): *My connection is to who I work for, so it is the local government.* It is likely, therefore, that strict supporters find that loyalty to the organization and public discretion are important features of good public administrators (19): *Sometimes customers will moan about the council in general. They may be people I know and I always defend what we do as an organization, because I don't think the public realize how much we actually do.* In addition, strict supporters will not easily betray their colleagues, even when it could get them into deep trouble (33). *I wouldn't ever betray a colleague. These are the people that you work with five days out of seven. You probably see them more often than you see your loved ones. So you've got to stay loyal to them.*

The internal orientation of strict supporters also influences their ideas about commitment. Good personal relations with their superiors will make them more committed to their work (42): *I think that your work suffers if you have bad relationships with your managers and colleagues.* As a result, strict supporters believe their main duty is to do what management expects of them (18): *I think they're on a higher level for a reason, and I'm on this level for a reason. So when they tell me to do something I will do it.* Remarkably, under managers' orders, strict supporters might even play games with the law. As it happens, strict supporters disagree with statement 2, "When elected officials ask something of me that is against the law, and despite my warnings they do not listen to me, I will not do what they ask". Like types A and B, strict supporters do not feel like public administrators 24 hours a day (24): *You've got to have that work-life balance.*

To summarize, strict supporters strictly obey the orders of their superiors. They also strictly follow the rules and regulations of the organization, meaning they do what they are told or are expected to do and support their organization. They would not malign the council. Although they feel a stronger connection to their organizations than to

the government in general, the loyalty is directed more to their managers and colleagues rather than the elected members of the council.

E: Independent Professionals

Independent professionals believe that political officials often have an interest in the short term only, which leads to ad-hoc decision making. It is the task of public administrators to also look at the long term (40): *Having worked in local government, there's a sort of understanding of the way decisions are made at the political level, particularly when elections at the council happen pretty much every two years, if not more. There's always half an eye on being re-elected which doesn't always lead to the most strategic decision. My particular area of work needs a very long-term view.* And: *Sometimes you can get people from the local political parties that just want to make an instant impact. They work for themselves really.* Their agreement with statement 2, "When elected officials ask something of me that is against the law, and despite my warnings they do not listen to me, I will not do what they ask", illustrates that independent professionals do not always have a good opinion of elected officials: *Sometimes elected officials or councillors ask us to break a rule, to do it not by the book, because there are interests involved. Then I think it's our job to say 'That's not right' because we've agreed on these rules and regulations.* It is, therefore, not surprising that independent professionals also disagree with statement 23, Even when my personal convictions about the public good are at odds with instructions of the elected official, I should follow his or her instructions: *It's what's fair in the end. It's better to be fair and do the things right than just be led by somebody who's got his own track.* Independent professionals thus seem strongly driven by the idea of impartiality and fairness, seeing them as more important than efficiency in their work (4). *You have got to judge each case on its own values. Sometimes it takes longer or different routes, rather than efficiency. To have fairness is much more important than having things done efficiently.*

Independent professionals agree with the statement that professionalism and loyalty to professional rules are the leading values in their work (32). They want to be seen as professionals and fear that their professionalism would be questioned if their own beliefs and values prevailed. They believe that public administrators should not base their decisions on personal values because, in such a case, citizens can no longer trust that policies and rules are followed uniformly (41): *You've got to think of how democracy works.* Consequently, independent professionals do not want to blend their private and professional life. They totally disagree with statement 14, "How I look at things in my work is partly determined by the people who surround me in private

life; a discussion with friends can influence my judgment”: *In a personal setting, sure. But when it comes to work, I think you have to separate those ties.*

Finally, independent professionals place a high value on their working life. Of all types, they are the only ones who disagree with statement 1, “In the end, my private life is more important than my work”: *That’s just totally not true. They are equally important. Work isn’t more important than my private life, my private life isn’t more important than work. Care should be taken to balance the two.*”

In summary, to ensure that all people have the same rights and are treated equally, independent professionals base their decisions on professional, rather than personal, values.

The Young Administrators

What kinds of people constitute the factors? Although generalization to a wider population is not our research aim, we make some cautious comments about the loyalty factors on the basis of respondents’ characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Significant Loaders, By Country and Gender

	<i>Factor A</i>	<i>Factor B</i>	<i>Factor C</i>	<i>Factor D</i>	<i>Factor E</i>
<i>English Women</i>	5	1		3	
<i>English Men</i>	3	1		1	2
<i>Dutch Women</i>		4	4	1	
<i>Dutch Men</i>		5	3		1

As Table 1 shows, Factor A describes English respondents only and Factor C describes Dutch respondents only. We can thus say that ‘legal moralists’ are typically English and ‘democratic servants’ are typically Dutch. Furthermore, Factors B and D describe mostly Dutch and mostly English respondents, respectively. Although not as strongly as A and C, we can say that ‘obedient freethinkers’ tend to be Dutch and ‘strict supporters’ tend to be English. Factors A, B, and C (legal moralists, obedient freethinkers, and democratic servants) are evenly distributed with respect to gender. Factor D (strict supporters) has more women and Factor E (independent professionals) describes only men.

There were no important differences between factors in age or years of work experience. The functions or job titles of the respondents are diverse (for example, civil engineer, advisor, project manager, policy officer, legal officer, coordinator), as are their work fields (for example, engineering, regeneration, communication, social security, culture, education). Only factor D (strict supporters) reveals job similarity: most of its respondents have back office jobs and do not deal directly with the public or elected members. Such an internal position perhaps explains their internal orientation (that is, they are most loyal to their colleagues and managers). This seems logical since they work with colleagues and

managers on a daily basis, not with the public or elected members.

As Factors A and D (legal moralists and strict supporters) describe only and mostly English respondents respectively, and Factors B and C (obedient freethinkers and democratic servants) describe only and mostly Dutch respondents respectively, we can postulate that there are not only differences between the English and Dutch respondents, but also within the English and Dutch respondents.

English young public administrators are more loyal to their administrative superiors, whereas Dutch young public administrators are more loyal to their political superiors. The loyalty of the English respondents is more with the law, rules and regulations, and with the orders from those who stand above them. The loyalty of the Dutch respondents, on the other hand, is more with the elected members of the council and members of the public. Factor A types (legal moralists) are more loyal to the law and their own moral principles, whereas the respondents of Factor D (strict supporters) are more loyal to the organization’s rules and regulations and their superiors’ orders. Factor B (obedient freethinkers) differs from Factor C (democratic servants) in that the first are more loyal to their own beliefs and values.

Due to the English *ultra vires* system, local government is largely in the control of central government. In the Netherlands, conversely, steering is not based on hierarchy but mutual adjustment. Dutch local governments have substantial discretion in the execution of national programs. Dutch public administrators can thus better take local priorities into account. That, in turn, is likely to lead to more loyalty to elected members and the local community.

Comparison of Younger with Older Administrators

What can we say about the loyalties of *young* administrators? Because the same Q set was used in three other studies involving older administrators, the outcomes can be compared. The earlier studies involved top Dutch administrators who work for the national government (De Graaf, 2011), a top Dutch municipal administrators (De Graaf, 2010), and Dutch street-level bureaucrats (to be more precise: local-license providers) (De Graaf & van der Wal, 2012). We are particularly interested in comparing the young administrators and the top municipal administrators in our previous study, where the youngest respondent in the top administrator group was older than any respondent of this study.

For young administrators, as for participants in earlier studies, all loyalty objects play a distinguishing role. But the administrators’ conceptions of loyalties clearly differ from each other, also as in previous work. Most notable, and perhaps most surprising, is that young administrators have the strongest loyalty towards the law, as

exemplified by the legal moralists (A) distinguished here. Young administrators find it most important to know and stick to the rules.

Also surprisingly—despite younger employees' lesser job security—we did not find a lower commitment to their own organization among young administrators. On the contrary, young administrators disagree strongly, and more strongly than groups in earlier studies, with the statement about feeling a stronger connection with government in general than with their own organization. This could also indicate, of course, that their public service motivation is lower than among older administrators.

As expected based on the literature, the loyalty towards their private lives is the strongest among young administrators. They do not feel like an administrator 24 hours a day. Young administrators have the strongest personal loyalty, including their own conscience.

Stakeholder loyalty seems to play a large role in the loyalty conceptions of young administrators, yet this loyalty is highest among street-level administrators. Loyalty to stakeholders in the policy field (the equivalent of client loyalty for top-level administrators) plays a small role in the loyalty conceptions of top administrators. It is the smallest of all distinguished objects of loyalty among the top municipal administrators (De Graaf, 2010). So the stakeholder loyalty of young administrators probably has a lot to do with their place in the hierarchy. Some types of street-level license providers express an even stronger loyalty to their clients, consistent with types that have been identified in the literature (for example, Lipsky, 1980). In the case of street-level bureaucrats, therefore, dealing with government clients on a daily basis has a significant impact on loyalty and engenders a type of loyalty not seen in top-level administrators. And young administrators are more likely to deal directly with clients than older, more senior, administrators.

Hierarchical loyalty seems to be the most important object of loyalty in all four studies of administrators. To this generalization we immediately add that the hierarchical loyalty is interpreted differently *within* each group (see for example the results section) as well as between the groups, and is contextually dependent. Furthermore, hierarchical loyalty is clearly weakest in street-level bureaucrats compared to the other groups; indeed, the hierarchical loyalty of several types of municipal license providers is relatively weak. An explanation for this could be that street-level bureaucrats, unlike top administrators, rarely deal directly with elected political superiors, which influences the way they interpret hierarchical loyalty. Since they also have the strongest loyalty to clients they have day-to-day contact with, we can hypothesize that, in general, the higher the frequency of contact with

specific stakeholders, the stronger the loyalties towards them. This is not a matter of age or experience. Notably, young English administrators find good personal relations with their superiors very important for their commitment to their work, much more so than any other group we studied.

Conclusions and Discussion

Compared to the Dutch Factors B and C (obedient freethinkers and democratic servants), which are more loyal to their political superiors, the English Factors A and D (legal moralists and strict supporters) are more loyal to their administrative superiors. Young English public administrators, however, vary. The English Factor A respondents (legal moralists) are more loyal to their own moral principles than English Factor D respondents (strict supporters). Dutch young public administrators also vary as a group. The respondents of the Dutch Factor B (obedient freethinkers) are more loyal to their own consciences than the respondents of the Dutch Factor C (democratic servants).

We found differences in how young administrators weigh their loyalties to councillors vis-à-vis other loyalty objects and identified five different loyalty types. Since the same Q set was used, this study can be compared with three other studies involving older Dutch participants: top Dutch administrators who work for the national government (De Graaf, 2011), top Dutch municipal administrators (De Graaf, 2010) and Dutch street-level bureaucrats (De Graaf & van der Wal 2012). The hierarchical loyalty seems to be the most important object of loyalty in all studies. However, hierarchical loyalty is interpreted differently within and between the groups, and is contextually dependent. Young administrators are, compared to the other groups, more loyal towards the law and their private life. On the other hand, young administrators disagree strongly and more than any other group with the statement about feeling a stronger connection with government in general than with their own organization.

It is, nevertheless, not clear whether the similarities and differences stem from the different positions within the groups, or from the fact that the top public administrators were all Dutch, whereas the young public administrators were Dutch and English, or from the age differences between the studies. Further research is thus needed to explore similarities and differences in loyalty conceptions between people with different jobs, people from different countries and younger and older public administrators.

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Appendix: Factor Array

No	Statements	A	B	C	D	E
1	In the end, my private life is more important than my work.	2	2	1	1	-2
2	When elected officials ask something of me that is against the law, and despite my warnings they do not listen to me, I will not do what they ask.	3	0	1	-2	3
3	Committing to obligations towards colleagues can lead to cronyism.	0	-1	-2	-1	-1
4	In my work, efficiency is more important than impartiality and fairness.	-3	-2	-2	-1	-3
5	In any mature democracy, young public administrators should be allowed to say what they want to in public. That's simply freedom of speech.	-2	1	-3	0	0
6	It is my main duty to mediate between conflicting interests and to find solutions everybody can live with.	0	1	-1	1	0
7	I work for the government because I want to serve society.	-1	0	3	0	1
8	I try to mitigate extreme resistance from societal partners of our organization.	0	1	1	-1	1
9	Sometimes elected officials want something that is practically impossible. What I notice in those cases is that we as public administrators have a very hard time saying 'no'.	-1	0	0	-1	1
10	In my work, I worry about the wellbeing of less privileged citizens.	0	0	-1	1	0
11	I find it very important to know all the rules and regulations and to stick to them.	1	-1	0	2	1
12	The public administrator whose actions are determined by party political considerations undermines essential principles and procedures of democracy.	2	0	2	-1	1

No	Statements	A	B	C	D	E
13	In my work, I should apply public values over my own political values.	1	2	3	2	2
14	How I look at things in my work is partly determined by the people who surround me in private life; a discussion with friends can influence my judgement.	-1	3	0	-2	-3
15	I have my own opinions on the morality of my actions when at work—I cannot leave that up to my political superiors.	2	0	-1	0	0
16	Even without religious or philosophical motives, administrators should be allowed to refuse a task if their conscience dictates so.	0	1	-1	-1	1
17	Public administrators should be accountable to criminal law for their public actions, even when doing exactly what their political superiors expect or want them to do.	1	-3	-2	-1	-1
18	It is my main duty to do what management expects me to.	1	-1	0	3	-2
19	The most important features of good public administrators are that they are loyal to their organization and discreet in the outside world.	-2	-2	0	1	-2
20	A public administrator works in public service. The political official should be his/her first client, but public administrators should decide for themselves what they think the best option is.	-1	-1	0	0	0
21	I know what is legal, not what is right. I stick to what is legal.	0	-1	1	1	0
22	Good public administrators focus on societal effects. Bad public administrators focus on bureaucratic output.	1	1	1	-1	-1
23	Even when my personal convictions about the public good are at odds with instructions of the elected official, I should follow his or her instructions.	-1	-1	1	1	-2
24	I feel like a public administrator 24 hours a day.	-3	-3	-1	-3	-1
25	I should be able to live with myself, which is why being loyal to my own conscience is the most important thing for me.	1	3	2	0	1
26	Loyalty to my councillor/cabinet can be less important than serving the public interest.	0	1	-2	0	0
27	Acting with integrity means for public administrators that they act according to their conscience.	1	1	0	-1	-1
28	Public administrators who are strongly focused on their own careers don't necessarily want the best for their colleagues.	0	0	0	-2	-1

<i>No</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>
29	Punishable or reprehensible conduct in your private life can sometimes be at odds with your duty to behave as a good public administrator.	0	0	1	0	1
30	Sometimes you have to bend the rules a little when dealing with societal partners of the organization.	-1	1	0	0	-1
31	When I disagree with a policy, I simply tell the concerned parties of our organization.	0	-1	-3	0	1
32	I believe that professionalism and loyalty to professional rules are the leading values in my work.	2	-1	0	2	2
33	I will not easily betray my colleagues, even when it would bring me into deep trouble.	-1	0	-1	1	0
34	When I find an assignment irresponsible, loyalty to my own conscience and identity is the deciding factor.	0	2	2	0	0
35	I feel a stronger connection with government in general than with my own organization.	-2	-2	0	-3	-2
36	A young public administrator should always be careful not to express him- or herself publicly if the manager dislikes such behaviour.	-1	-2	-1	0	1
37	The rules that I have to follow in dealing with stakeholders lower my efficiency and effectiveness.	-1	-1	-1	-2	0
38	As a young public administrator, I feel strongly connected to other young public administrators.	-2	2	1	1	0
39	The disqualification of any educated opinion—including public administrators—cannot be tolerated in a modern democracy.	0	0	0	0	-1
40	Political officials often have an interest in the short term only, which leads to ad-hoc decision making. It is the task of public administrators to also look at the long run.	1	1	1	2	3
41	Public administrators should not base their decisions on personal values because in such a case citizens can no longer trust that policies and rules are followed uniformly.	1	0	2	1	2
42	Good personal relations with my superiors will make me more committed to my work.	3	0	-1	3	0

Note: All translations of statements between English and Dutch, and all translations of Dutch interviews to English were made by the authors.